THE MINISTRY CALLED TO SELF-DENIAL.

A SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE MATRICULATION OF STUDENTS

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Καθαπερ εν λιμενι, του πλοιου καθορμισθεντος, αν εξελθης υδρευσασθαι, οδου μεν παρεργον εστι, και κοχλιδιον αναλεξασθαι, η βολβαριον· τετασθαι δε δει την διανοιαν επι το πλοιον, και συνεχως επιστρεφεσθαι, μη τοι γε ὁ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΤΗΣ καλεση· και τοτε παντα εκεινα αφιεναι, ἱνα μη δεδεμενος εμβληθης, ὡς τα προβατα· ὑυτω και εν τῳ βιῳ, εαν διδωται αντι βολβαριου και κοχλιδιου γυναικαριον και παιδιον, ουδεν κωλυσει· εαν δε ὁ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΤΗΣ καλεση, τρεχε επι το πλοιον, αφεις εκεινα παντα, μηδεν επιστρεφομενος,———— μηποτε Καλουντος ελλιπης.

EPICTETUS. *Ench.* 12.

THE MINISTRY CALLED TO SELF-DENIAL.

St. Luke, ix. 60.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

This is a startling saying. It would draw attention from any speaker, under any circumstances. How much more from the lips of the Eternal Word, whose fiat is life, and His will law, for the unnumbered hosts of heaven, and the universe which He spake into being and upholdeth by the word of His power!

From those blessed lips no idle saying ever fell. The record of their words has been made, we know, with reference to us and our salvation. Once and forever, what Jesus spake is the truth, the spirit and the life. Time has no power to change or to annul it. He who read the hearts of all his creatures, spake and placed his words on record to us all and for us all. Social and civil revolutions may alter, not do away nor lessen their bearing on his church collectively and its members individually, wherever scattered, after whatever lapse of ages.

Humbly and reverently, therefore, brethren, as if the Redeemer's gracious voice now first addressed it to our ears; with as anxious interest as if it were addressed to us by name, let us inquire the reason and the meaning of his command, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

It is handed down to us in a remarkable connexion, as one of three answers addressed to individuals, plainly representing as many classes of the followers of Christ. "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto

him, LORD, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And JESUS said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, LORD, suffer me first to go and bury my father. JESUS said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of GOD. And another also said, LORD, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And JESUS said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of GOD." Here we have the representatives of the rash and inconsiderate, who plunge into an undertaking of which they have not waited to count the cost; of the lukewarm and indifferent, who suffer other cares to divide a heart but half obedient to their Master's call; of vacillating double-mindedness, unstable in a determination of which neither the nature nor the results are duly realized.

It is not to be believed that a connexion so wonderfully apt was without wise design in the good providence of GOD. The three incidents make up one harmonious and perfect whole. As parts of that whole, they are equally necessary to each other, equally important, equally and co-extensively instructive.

Yet it cannot be denied that they have been somewhat differently regarded, in almost all ages of the Church. Two of the Saviour's answers have passed into proverbs; the one as descriptive of our LORD'S own condition while on earth; the other as a statement of the nature of his calling, generally to all who bear his name and baptismal badge, but more especially to those entrusted with the stewardship of his word and sacraments. The third, meanwhile, (that taken for my text,) with nothing to render it of less general interest and application, and surely not less noticeable for its form and import, has been kept comparatively out of view. The others, merely declaratory, are in the

mouth of every one: this, an express command, is heard with listless disregard, or shrinking apprehension, and used, if used at all, with the most cautious limitation and assemblage of modifying adjuncts.

The cause of this difference is not difficult of discovery. The neglected answer is one of those hard sayings of the Son of God, which He has left to prove his people. It sounds in apparent discord from the general tenor of his teaching, and grates upon the unskilful ear too harshly to be willingly endured. That He who wept at the grave of Lazarus, and cared for the bereavement of his mother in his last agonies upon the cross, should return to the humble, reasonable request of filial piety, "Lord, suffer me to go first and bury my father," the harsh answer, "Let the dead bury their dead", is a seeming incongruity on which the mind loves not to dwell. It amazes and confounds us. We turn away from even the semblance of violence done by the Saviour to the kindly impulses and holy yearnings of natural affection, and gladly forget it in the contemplation of the harmony of his teaching, recommending every charity that can adorn and soften life, with the beautiful uniformity of his conduct, a continual pattern of obedience and the highest exemplar of love.

But this is not all. The very fact which gives this saying of our Lord its strong claim on our attention,—its general and perpetual bearing and application,—has rendered it distasteful. If, eqnally with its two associates, this answer is addressed through the individual who first called it forth, to a class, a large class, a class never unrepresented in a Christian community, its harshness is more than a trait of history: it is a requisition, a rebuke, too often in effect a repulse, coming home to them, binding on their consciences, registered against them in the book of God's account. They, and others prompted by a spurious and ill-judging charity, would willingly lessen its severity or escape its

application. 'It had reference to the individual and the times,' they say: 'its force expired with them.' But if so, why have men, with one consent, understood the next following reply, in an inseparable connexion, so differently? Why is it held to be yet as true that "he who putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of GOD", as it was during the Saviour's stay on earth, if it be not also as true *now*, as *then*, that the dead are to be left to bury their dead by those whom the Master calls to follow him? No, brethren, the subterfuge is unavailing. Whether we will hear it, or whether we will forbear, it is *us* whom the Saviour warns equally against lukewarm indifference to his call, as against rash inconsiderateness or timid hesitation.

But what is the precise import of this command, as originally addressed, and as it bears on us?

Ingenuity has been busy with devices for explaining away its seeming harshness by rendering the meaning less general in its range. 'Leave the dead to themselves,' has been offered as one interpretation: 'Leave to the bearers of the dead the performance of their office,' as another. Both are recommended by their tendency to give the address a local and temporary character. Both are found untenable when tried by common sense and usage. The means of narrowing the Saviour's saying to the individual addressed, and the peculiar facts of his special case, are sought in vain. It remains applicable, necessarily, inevitably applicable to a class, a great division of our race. The spiritually dead, the dead in trespasses and sins, they in whom the life of the soul in GOD is dormant or extinct, are pointed out by the LORD JESUS to his follower, as those to whom he is to leave the care that would draw off his attention from his Master's call. '*Let the dead bury their dead:* Leave to those who know no higher claim, the discharge of the last

sad offices to thy parent's unburied corpse: for thee there is a more imperative and immediate duty: the voice that shall raise the dead has called thee into a *new*, a spiritual life, and interposed relations higher, stronger than those of earthly parentage, with resulting obligations of more instant and engrossing concerment than attention to the deceased.'

No doubt the trial thus prescribed was peculiarly hard. To deprive himself of the last look at the remains of him who gave him being, nursed him up to manhood and trained him for its duties; to leave his father's corpse to the care of others, to go unwept, unhonoured, unattended to the tomb! In what barbarian age or race shall we seek the son whose heart would not be wrung by such a bidding? How much more must it have been repugnant to a son of Abraham and the patriarchs, in whose hallowed examples had been set a long transmitted and most faithfully kept law of reverent attention to the dead! Religious observance, national usage of immemorial antiquity, and the dictates of natural affection, were arrayed against the requisition. Surely He who knew the issues of the heart He made, had strong reason for putting it to such a test!

But are we therefore warranted in regarding it as an isolated instance? a case where peculiar need led to a peculiar demand, or a peculiar disposition required a peculiar trial?

This is forbidden by the connexion, as we have seen, and by the contrast between the two great classes of our race implied in the command itself. The spiritually dead are placed in opposition to such as live unto GOD, and it is *as living unto* GOD that the newly called follower of JESUS is required to deny his natural affections, his national habits, and his conventional ties and obligations, that he may devote himself to His Master's work.

That each may devote himself, wholly and unreservedly, to his Master's work,——this, brethren, is to every one of us

the reason and meaning of our LORD's command "Let the dead bury their dead." To work out his own soul's salvation, to labour for that of those dependent on him, and to glorify GOD in his generation by a consistent, holy and humble walk, is a task assigned every individual who is named by the name of JESUS. It is *the calling* of the members of the Church of Christ, as such,—to which all earthly ties and obligations must concede an undisputed preference in their heart and conduct. The world has its aims and ends,

> 'as various as the roads men take
> In journeying through life;'

but the Christian, who has heard his Master's voice, and become obedient to His calling, has renounced them. His occupations may, and in a degree must, resemble those of the multitude around him, but are no longer the business of his life. He goes about them as of secondary consequence. The *ends* of his neighbour are with him mere *means*, and often means of very subordinate interest and importance, to work out the one end and aim of his existence. He looks far beyond the relations of life and the claims of society for the source of obligation to the duties of his station, and he finds it, in the changeless will and unfathomable love of GOD, his Maker and Redeemer, operative with a force and intensity of which the mere man and citizen has had neither experience nor conception: but he there finds it, connecting with the duties of his station, as the world knows them, and placing above them and before them, others by which those duties are sometimes modified, sometimes superseded, and even sometimes contravened. By the world, for example, he is is held bound to cherish his own body and those of his dependents; to lay up in store for his own and their need in future emergencies; and to advance his own and their ease, emolument and reputation, by all honourable and honest means. It is

enough for the world's ends, and fills the measure of its rule of right, although all this be done in the merest self-centering egotism, or in the shallowest superficial respect for general opinion. The Gospel reveals to him a deeper motive and a more searching estimate, in the love wherewith GOD loved us, and requires that we love Him and those whom He has given us for His sake: but at the same time teaches him to keep his own body under, bringing it into subjection, and to train his children and dependents in a like course of moderation and self-denial; to count money, time and pains laid out in the relief of the temporally and spiritually destitute as the only substantial provision against the day of want; and to dread and shun riches, worldly influence and temporal prosperity, as fraught with dangers of the most awful consequence.

My brethren, I know this is neither prevalent nor popular doctrine. But I appeal to you, as men and Christians, whether it be not the doctrine of our LORD and Master, taught by Him as plainly as language can express it; enforced by His personal example and invariable requisitions of His immediate followers; and left on record in His sacred word without a syllable of cautionary limitation or explanatory comment. Men have explained away the strong language of their Saviour, or when they neither could nor dared do so, have been content to leave it a dead, neglected letter: but there it is, in the word of GOD, on record still. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek: but seek ye first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness." "Wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation!" "Wo unto you that are full!" "Wo unto you

that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." "If any man hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."—These are but a few of our LORD'S declarations on the subject of worldly ties and obligations. I might heap together very many more, to the same effect, or even stronger. Do they not furnish an extended and sufficient comment on His injunction, to "let the dead bury their dead?" Let those who receive not the spiritual life that CHRIST came to give us when He had purchased it with His blood, concern themselves with this bodily life as their main business. It is wisdom with them to lay up much goods for many years, to take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry: but we are taught that their wisdom is foolishness with GOD. It is foresight and honourable ambition with them to build houses that shall continue for ever, and dwelling-places to all generations, and to call the lands after their own names: but we are taught to look, not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal, and to seek a building of GOD, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It is love and duty with them to pamper the bodies of their kindred in ease and fulness, and when they die to leave the rest of their substance to their babes: but we are taught to love the soul, and nourish it with the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, and to make provision for our children not for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts, but for the immortal soul, that it may be enriched with treasures that wax not old, and clothed with the raiment of its Redeemer's righteousness, and made sure of those mansions in its Father's house which CHRIST has gone before to prepare for such as love Him and have followed Him in the way of humility, self-denial, reproach, and suffering.

Thus to provide for their own souls and those bound to them by ties of blood, kindred and society, is the one great duty of all who are here assembled. Let each answer for himself how far he has left the dead to bury their dead, and gone about his Master's work.

But for you, young brethren, who as candidates for holy orders, profess to be moved by the HOLY GHOST to take upon you the especial commission of CHRIST to minister as His ambassadors in the work of reconciliation, for you the words of our Saviour have a meaning and application, (not more direct and true than they have for evey individual in this congregation, that were impossible, but) more full and strict. You are in the very circumstances of the individuals to whom they were first addressed; called to an especial attendance upon your Saviour, looking forward to an especial mission in His behalf. Your appearance here is your solemn declaration to the world, that in the orderings of His providence, in the counsel of His representatives, and in the depths of your own consciousness, you have heard the voice of the Son of GOD, saying, '*Follow me.* Follow me in the blessed work of seeking and saving your lost fellow-beings. Follow me in ministering the bread of life and waters of salvation to souls ready to perish. Follow me to pass between the dead and the living, and stay the plague that has gone out against the rebellious sons of Adam from before their GOD.'

With some of you, I know, the world has already been busy and bold to plead its reasons why you should hold yourselves excused from obeying such a call. One day or other, it may be before, or it may be not until after the irrevocable step of self-dedication has been taken, all shall be more or less tried in the same way. Claims of duty or affection, of interest or ambition, will present themselves, and conflict with your devotion to the

work you have undertaken. God be thanked! the condition of His Church among us renders the very choice of the ministry an act of self-denial in most who seek it. Under ordinary circumstances, talents and industry are sure of better temporal remuneration in any other walk of life than the ministration at the altar of the Lord. Nevertheless, temptations still remain, few and rare in the way of ample support and popular estimation, many and pressing in the form of work without a workman's hire, usefulness without encouragement, calls of duty at the risk of health or life, labour amidst and against obstacles of the most formidable kind, both temporal and spiritual. Such are yearly increasing, and must increase for many years, perhaps generations, in our country. To prepare you for them, and arm you against them, was my design in the choice of a subject. They will be to you, what the young man's father's funeral was to him, specious snares spread by the enemy of souls, seeking to rob the Lord Jesus of His chosen instruments, and you of your exceeding great reward. To you severally, before God and His elect angels, your Master now addresses, by His servant's voice, the injunction, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

You, brethren, who are about to matriculate this evening, are entering on a course of study, discipline and devotion, by which you may be fitted for that most arduous and most awfully responsible of all human occupations, the ministry of the Gospel. Self-denial is required of you, to study rightly, and rightly to mingle with your study active zeal, and quiet devotion. You have acquired, it may be, literary tastes and habits, which until now it has been equally a duty and a delight to gratify. The sweetened brim of the cup of knowledge has been held to your lips, and solicits deep and prolonged draughts of the invigorating and stimulating, but, alas, too often intoxicating beverage. Far

be it from me to discourage thorough, and even discursive study! There is no branch of human science or learning that may not be turned to profitable account by the Christian minister. They all subserve the ends, and do the high behests of the queen of sciences, divine theology. They all enlarge the student's mind, and elevate his station among his fellows, and therefore tend to fit the pastor for his duties as a teacher and spiritual governor. But while they who best know the terrible accountability and difficulty of the pastoral charge will be most willing to allow and recommend a thorough furnishment with intellectual armour of every kind, they will also most dread the enervating, sensualizing tendency of mere literary, scientific, or æsthetical pursuits and tastes, when suffered to become a primary or even an important object of attention. There is a sense, in which they will counsel the young herald of divine salvation to

'Drink deep of the Pierian spring;'

as opposed to the superficial, maddening potations of the sciolist and charlatan: but let him beware of imagining that its waters may with impunity be mingled with those of

'Siloa's brook that flows
Fast by the oracle of God.'

The world may court the dilettante and connoisseur in clerical costume, and admire his exquisite taste and practised judgment, his extensive reading and apt quotations; but its admiration will be mingled with contempt. It will regard him as brought down to its own level, feeding on its own garbage, drinking in of its own spirit. How shall the same lips discuss the merits of a playwright, the skill of a novelist, or the value of a chef-d'œuvre, and proclaim the judgments of the Lord against Babylon and Tyre? Men will not listen, as to God's messenger set over them to instruct, premonish, and rebuke, to him who has been sitting with them at the feet of their own idols. There are those,

indeed, who will tell you of the value of accomplishments, of polish, and of information, to win acceptance for the word of truth. Believe it not. The truth of God is masked and fettered, not adorned, by the bedizenments of style. Be earnest. Be zealous. Be faithful. Be yourself enwrapped in the mysterious themes of revelation. Thus shall you command, not bribe attention, and secure a respect, and deference, and trust, which mere literary attainments can never gain.

"Let the dead bury their dead," then, brethren.—Let the barrister and the senator seek to clothe the transient interest and petty moment of their themes with the factitious value of their own literary reputation and cultivated style. Let the worldling furnish himself with prattle for the boudoir and the saloon from the runlets that are hourly pouring their tiny rills into the bedabbled stream of literature. Let the votaries of science pursue their useful and dignified researches in its learned halls. They labour each in his vocation. You, too, have yours. "Go ye, and preach the kingdom of God." His word has depths which the profoundest thought can never sound, and heights to which the loftiest imagination has never soared. Age after age has drawn from its treasure-houses, and still the stores are free to all, and full beyond man's finite conception or desire. There furnish yourselves for your high calling. Use arts, and sciences, and languages, and literature old and new, as instruments to work withal, and when the tired faculties demand unbending, as harmless recreations: but never so far forget your place in this passing scene, as to make them your aim, or even to associate them in your efforts and affections with the one all-engrossing, all-absorbing work you have to do.

For that work you are here to prepare yourselves; and Jesus, when he sought the doctors in the temple, has taught us to consider the very preparation as a part of the work itself. But it is

when the time of your 'first proving'* shall have been accomplished that your season of trial shall begin. The companions of your boyhood and youth, your school-fellows and college-mates, will be just starting on their several paths in life. One shall have taken to himself a wife, another shall have bought a farm, a third begun to count the profits of his merchandize, and a fourth tasted the first delicious fruits of industry and talents well applied in popular applause or growing reputation. Before you what prospect will be opening? Penury, seclusion, contumely and opposition, it may be. An humble round of duty in an unattractive sphere, it must be, under any ordinary circumstances—self-denial, in many of its most appalling forms, it will be, if you are indeed actuated by your Master's spirit, and resolved to do your Master's work. I know the picture has its bright side too; and bright it is, indeed, to the eye of faith! But these statements are none the less true, notwithstanding. In some respects we, the clergy of this age, occupy a position not unlike that of the first propagators of the Gospel. We are laying the foundation of a goodly edifice in the LORD'S heritage, for future times. Others may come after, and be made glad in its ivory palaces, and take shelter under its goodly beams of cedar: it is our lot to clear away the rubbish, and break up the ground, and lay deep and solid its foundations, and in the meanwhile bear the brunt of the driving storm, or the heat of the scorching sun, and with the one hand work, and in the other hold a weapon. In most parts of our country, every thing has yet to be done. The people are to be aroused, and gathered, and taught, and banded, and disciplined, and fed. The merest necessaries for GOD'S worship are to be provided, and even the need of them to be inculcated. The house where His honour dwelleth has to be built. The appurtenances of prayer and

* 1 Timothy iii. 10.

praise are to be furnished. The poor, and the destitute, and the sick, and the widow, and the orphan, are to be relieved. Is it strange, that with all this to do, and the evil heart of man, and the busy enemy of souls and the god of this world to hinder, the support of the ministry should be ill secured, almost not at all attended to? I am far from thinking that in any case our brethren of the laity do what they can, or even what they ought: but when I look over the face of our land, widening and peopling with an almost magical rapidity, I am surprised rather at what is done than at what is not—when the obstacles from every quarter are taken into account. This state of things must long continue, and of late years has rapidly and alarmingly increased in prevalence. There is no help nor remedy for it, under God, but self-denial in the ministry. It will be in vain to inculcate on the laity the duty of supporting those who are separated for their service in things sacred. They know it already. It is the first dictate of justice, honesty, and that manly fairness, which so generally characterizes the yeomanry of our country. They recognize the obligation. Their plea for its non-performance is, that they do all they are able. Brethren of the congregation, that plea is rarely true! Who among us does for the maintenance and extension of the Gospel the half of what was required of the Israelite by divine prescription for the support of his polity and worship, and still left ability and willingness on his part to add freewill-oblations and thank-offerings? Our Master will not hold you so excused, by the specious plea that satisfies a gain-loving and self-enjoying age.—But to us, my young brethren, that plea takes the shape of fact, and we must meet it as a fact.

How shall this be done?

By beginning, at a high and commanding elevation, the course of conduct which shall correct the growing evil. Want of *self-*

denial is its source; a love of gain rather than godliness, of ease rather than privation and exertion for the service of the LORD. We must go forth and preach self-denial in our lives. We must go forth to preach the Gospel, asking for nothing but a hearing. We must go forth, as our Master sent His first ministers, in faith that He who sent us can support us. We must be willing to forego the comfort of a home, and the endearments of a family, and the quiet seclusion of a study, for CHRIST'S and the Gospel's sake.

At this moment sixty places are advertized by the authorities of our Church as willing and desirous to receive the word and ordinances, and not one minister can be found to say, 'Here am I, send me!' Is this right? Is it primitive? Is it *Christian*?—But it is said, 'They cannot be supported.' Think you that Paul, or one of Paul's companions, would not have found support in the worst spot of our western wilderness? Is the LORD'S arm shortened, that He cannot help in our days? Is His ear waxed dull, that He cannot hear? Is His promise to be with us abrogated, that He will not now bear witness to His word and ministering servants?—My brethren! I have sought diligently for a ground of distinction between our duty in this respect, and that of those who forsook houses, and brethren, and sisters, and father, and mother, and wife, and children, and lands, for JESUS' name's sake, in the first generation of His followers, and I cannot find it. Souls are precious now as then. Ungodliness, though varied in its forms, is as rife now as then. Satan is as busy now as then. Alas, yes! and he is more successful! for he works now on the love of ease, and the fear of want, and the dread of suffering, in the hearts of Christians, even in that which should be the choicest of GOD'S temples, the heart of His ministering servant. It is want of faith that cripples us, and palsies the energies of the LORD'S embattled host. It is want of faith that

has converted our missionary doings into computations of vile money, and poisons the spring of life with the polluted streams of Mammon's kennels. It is want of faith that swells our lists of unemployed clergymen, and keeps our borders bare and impoverished of spiritual supplies. It is want of faith that sends our missionary bishops solitary wanderers through uncultivated deserts, and leaves the halls of our theological seminaries comparatively empty, while the bar, the medical school, the engineer's corps, and the counting house, are thronged with talent, energy, and zeal.

Could these things be so, brethren, were we indeed persuaded of THE REALITY OF GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE IN HIS CHURCH to make His word powerful as a hammer rending the rock in pieces; His ordinances fertilizing as living streams, conveying pardon, grace and holiness, wherever they are carried; and His ministers workers together with Him, in reconciling the world unto Himself? It was "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings," that the blessed apostle approved himself a minister of GOD, and so verified his claim to be an "ambassador for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech" the world "by him." Mark it, brethren! these things *proved* him the true minister of the Master whom he followed! and to his beloved Timothy it was his dying charge, to "endure affliction, and do the work of an evangelist, and" so "make full *proof* of his ministry." To give our ministrations validity, the sure and regular transmission of the call through those entrusted with it, in long succession, from CHRIST himself, is enough. But to give them energy and success, to inbreathe life and spirit into the outward form, to tip the tongue with fire, and clothe the man of flesh with light like that which shone from the countenance of Moses when he had been upon the mount, something

more is requisite—the work of God's Spirit in a sincerity and intensity of faith, and love, and zeal, which *can* show themselves to others only in the highest forms of self-denial. *That* men can appreciate. Prove to them a call of God, like that of Aaron, and they will speculate, and cavil, and wonder, and at best admit it with cold assent. Deliver to them a message like that of Jonah, of impending destruction, present repentance and offered mercy, and some will mock, and many turn away in heedless apathy. But John the Baptist, in his raiment of camel's hair and leathern girdle, and the seventy wandering from city to city, destitute of every necessary for their undertaking, draw attention and strike home to the beholders a conviction of reality. They can understand that a messenger must have good assurance of a mission which is to be so executed. They perceive that he is actuated by views and motives higher than their own, and are thus disposed to place in him that confidence which a nobler nature always commands from its inferiors. Curiosity and respect combine to induce them to lend a listening ear, and they are willing to be taught by one whom they feel to be above them.*

God forbid, my brethren, that I should urge this as a *reason* for extraordinary self-denial in the ministry! I do but state it, as the most desirable and sure *consequence* of obedience to the command of our Divine Master. It is *His will* that His ministering servants should be so tried, and *that will* makes the result a blessing to His Church, and a tenfold blessing to their own souls in the exceeding great reward of enhanced success. The trial may be various in its form. It will not always come in the shape of want, and isolation, and sundered ties, and checked affections. There are other more insidious and dangerous snares attendant on the easier paths, against which the minister of

* See Note at the end.

Christ needs to be doubly vigilant, that in humbleness of heart and holiness of life, he may show out of a godly conversation his unfeigned faith. But when, as to many of you must be the case, the call of the Redeemer is to follow him in the work of love and mercy, through privations and distresses, at the cost of sacrifices which men call unreasonable and cruel, at the risk of being deemed enthusiasts and rash—brethren, *trust your Lord!* "let the dead bury their dead, but go ye and preach the kingdom of God."

NOTE.

A SPARE leaf tempts the writer to add an illustration of a remark made on a preceding page—that men are willing to be taught by those who come to them in self-denial.

On the festival of St. Matthias, six hundred and thirty years ago, the son of a merchant of a little mountain town in Italy heard read in the gospel for the day the words, "Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves." From that day forth he had neither home nor property, change of raiment nor money to provide it. He wandered literally as a stranger and pilgrim on the face of the earth, depending continually for his next meal and his night's lodging on the Providence of GOD working in the charity of man. He did more. Smitten with the love of his condition, he found means to engraft his feelings on the minds of others, and to bind them with himself in joint vows of utter destitution, perpetual celibacy, and implicit obedience to an ecclesiastical superior. In ten years, this penniless, friendless outcast had gathered a band of *five thousand* sworn disciples. At this day, *seven thousand five hundred communities,* numbering more than *two hundred thousand* inmates, follow his example and own his law; and in all nearly *three millions* of our race already gone to their account, shall rise up at the last day to bear witness, for weal or for wo, to the influence of that example and the moral efficiency of that law.

These are momentous facts. Duly weighed, they will be found to show that the day shall come, when Francis of Assisi shall be found to have had more influence on his kind, than the widest wasting spoiler that ever ravaged the earth's fair surface, and built himself a memorial out of the miseries of his fellow beings. Conquest, with its attendant minions, slaughter, fire and famine, does but affect transiently the millions whom it causes to suffer. To any of them, it is but a momentary blast, over and forgotten when the long vista of eternity opens up to view. Meanwhile the quiet victories of the Italian friar have been going on, subjugating body and soul to a sway *meant* to be, and in its consequences sure to be, eternal. Those who shed their life-blood for an ambitious leader, are by the very act set loose from his control for ever. The thousands of thousands who have been hurried to the place of the departed from the battle fields of Napoleon, now look back on far other than *his* designs and plans as the sources of their endless happiness or misery. But the rule of the Franciscan binds him to a life-long servitude *in order to* an eternal continuance beyond the grave. The hour will never come when its effects shall have passed away. They will abide, and grow, world without end.

Is not this a fearful contemplation? How shall we account for the phenomenon of power like this wielded by a mortal man over the immortal souls of his fellow men? Not, surely, by the shallow sophism of those who shelter their own ignorance or sloth by the remark, that he was the impersonation of the spirit of his age, the creature of circumstances, owing to them alike his origination and the continuance of his sway! What! did the fifth century breathe less of the spirit of asceticism than the thirteenth? Were the foundations of society less shaken by the overturn of the old Empire of the West than by the Guelf and Ghibeline contests of an Italian priest and a German potentate? Have the strange vicissitudes that have new moulded society and recast all its forms in Europe since the thirteenth century, uniformly chanced to favour this one institution of religious mendicancy, and it alone? Each more absurd than the other, the suppositions confute themselves. We must seek elsewhere than in external circumstances for the birth of a spirit of such surpassing and enduring might.

We may find it, in the text of the preceding discourse, and in the many passages of kindred import that the New Testament contains. It was a word of GOD, misconstrued and misapplied, but still A WORD OF GOD, believed and acted out, that was mighty to prevail over the dictates of nature, the ties of life, the tyranny of custom, and the shock of change and time. The Saviour's call to leave all and follow Him, was the charm that wrought in Francis and by which he wrought on others, to the accomplishment of such wonderful results.

It wrought, indeed, not unto life. Like the knowledge of CHRIST made manifest by Paul, its savour was of death unto death in them that perish. In the narrowness of their own spirit, they narrowed the significancy of their LORD's instructions, and expounded them as literal rules, for uniform, unvarying observance. Thus they lost the spirit of the Gospel, and made the message of salvation through free grace an onerous and dead law of works. One unalterable standard applied to the outward man, was their measure of Christian character and attainment. The kingdom of GOD, instead of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, became a system of meats and drinks, and external garb and bodily observance. The result of substituting *rules* for *principle*, and *forms* for *spirit*, showed themselves in pride, vain glory, and base hypocrisy and fraud, on the one hand, and in blind, brute-like obedience, and the most marvellously stupid credulity, on the other.

But shall we therefore join in the laugh, so long and loud, which has been raised against these deluded victims of superstition?

Apart from the sobering consideration that their delusions concerned eternal interests, and those of millions, and that seas of blood and tears may at the last great day prove of less serious moment than what we now look upon with gibes and merriment—apart from this, we may find something to check the rising laugh, in the *principle* which lay at the root of their strange plant, and in its application to ourselves.

That principle was THE REALITY OF ETERNAL INTERESTS, and its consequence, the comparative utter insignificance of every worldly possession and pursuit.

This, it will be said, we all admit as well as they. It is part of our daily profession, the fundamental article of our faith.

It is so. The difference is this. We *profess* it, and say it in our creeds. They ACTED on it.

It may be that it was derangement of intellect that made the father of the mendicants apply to himself the charge of the Saviour to the seventy. But who will have the hardihood to deny that he was sincere in his mistaken obedience? That sincerity it was that gave him power and contagious zeal; and its perpetuation, even though only as a grain of mustard seed buried in fraud and superstition, has permeated the whole mass, and kept life in it to this very day.

When shall our holier cause, the advocacy of a pure faith and spiritual life given of GOD for the salvation of our perishing race, free as the air to all, if they will but hear and believe, and be converted to the LORD and live—when shall it find agents as much in earnest, and therefore as successful? Oh, the burning disgrace, that they who pander to Rome's usurpations and corruptions, should exceed us in the best qualification for the work to which we profess to have a calling, derived from the crucified Redeemer through the apostles and martyrs who sealed his testimony with their blood!

Sweet is the smile of home; the mutual look
When hearts are of each other sure;
Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,
The haunt of all affections pure;
Yet in the world even these abide, and we
Above the world our calling boast:
Once gain the mountain top, and thou art free:
Till then, who rest, presume; who turn to look,
are lost.

KEBLE.